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Approved For Release 2002/02/12 : CIA-RDP79R00890A000700040017-8

NSC BRIEFING

3 April 1956

ICELAND PARLIAMENT BIDS US TROOPS DEPART

- I. 28 Mar resolution.
- A. Let Icelanders maintain Keflavik airbase.
 - B. Let US forces leave.
 - C. Otherwise, will renounce '51 defense agreement.
- II. Article VII: 18-month cancellation clause.
- III. Resolution (31-18) is election move.
- A. Sponsored by Progressive (non-Communist) Party.
- IV. Anti-base sentiment increasing.
- 25X6 A. [REDACTED]
- B. With detente, US troops felt unnecessary.
- V. Increased Sov trade also possible factor.
- VI. As election issue, anti-base line popular.
- A. Even Conservatives lukewarm on base.
- VII. Conclusion: some post-election revision '51 agreement certain.

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DOCUMENT NO. _____
NO CHANGE IN CLASS. _____
X DECLASSIFIED
CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE _____
AUTH: [REDACTED]
DATE: 1-14-80 REVIEWER: 372044

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NSC BRIEFING

3 April 1956

ICELAND PARLIAMENT ATTACKS NATO AIRBASE

1. The Icelandic parliament, on 28 March--in a move looking toward the June elections--called for a revision of the 1951 Defense Agreement with the US, so that US troops in Iceland could be withdrawn. Failing this, parliament declared that the Agreement would be renounced.

2. The Parliamentary resolution calls for immediate initiation of discussions with Washington on a revision of the '51 bilateral Defense Agreement, with the "aim" of having the Icelanders themselves take over guarding and maintaining the Keflavik airbase--without, however, undertaking any military activities. If agreement cannot be reached on this revision, the Defense Agreement shall then be renounced, under the provisions of Article VII.

3. This article of the Agreement stipulates that either Government may request the NATO Council to review the continued necessity for the facilities. If the two Governments cannot reach any understanding within a period of six months from the date of the original request, either government may at any time thereafter give notice of its intention to terminate the Agreement completely. The Agreement shall then cease to be in force twelve months from the date of such notice.


4. The resolution, which also affirmed Iceland's wish to cooperate with its neighbors in security matters, "including participation in NATO", passed 31-18: the "yeas" including the votes of the Progressives (16), Social Democrats (6), Communists (7) and National Defense Party (2). The resolution was essentially a Progressive-Social Democratic

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move, looking toward the 24 June parliamentary elections. The Progressive Party, which has been a restive member of the incumbent Conservative-dominated coalition government since September 1953, decided at its party Convention (8-13 March) to terminate participation in this government. The party convention also passed a foreign policy and defense resolution essentially the same as that ultimately presented to parliament.

25X6

5. Anti-air base sentiment has been steadily growing in Iceland  Beginning with Stalin's death and stimulated greatly by the July 1955 Summit Conference, the conviction has grown among an increasing number of Icelanders that Iceland's and NATO's security no longer requires the presence of US troops in Iceland.

6. Iceland's attitude may also be affected by its increased trade with the Soviet Bloc, which in 1955 took 27.7 percent (\$14.4 million) of Iceland's exports and provided 22.2 percent (\$17.3 million) of its imports--thereby replacing the US as Iceland's largest market.

7. The Progressive party, which is largely rural (with some liberal urban support), lost votes in the 1953 parliamentary election to the ~~small~~ but fanatically anti-base non-Communist National Defense Party. Progressive party leaders evidently see the base question as an issue on which to win popular support in the June parliamentary elections.

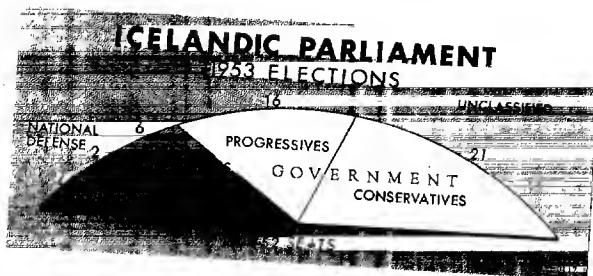
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8. In the elections, the Conservatives will defend the base agreement only to the extent of maintaining that the security of Iceland and NATO must be seriously and dispassionately studied before any decision can be made. The Progressives and Social Democrats, who have formed an electoral alliance, will stand on the 28 March parliamentary resolution. The Communists, who would like to see all Iceland's NATO ties severed and the base evacuated by May 1957, are not expected to make any significant gains.

9. No serious negotiations are likely to be initiated before the election, but whatever the election's outcome, Iceland is certain to demand some revision of the '51 Agreement.

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